

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SS-15 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

AGR-05 IGA-01 /081 W

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R 280530Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7544

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, EAGR, BG

SUBJ: EXTENSION OF FOODGRAIN RATIONING SYSTEM

1. BANGLADESH FOOD MINISTER ABDUL MOMIN ANNOUNCED  
JULY 24 BDG DECISION TO EXTEND EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1  
STATUTORY RATIONING TO INCLUDE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND  
EMPLOYEES LIVING OUTSIDE THE STATUTORY RATIONING AREAS.

2. MOMIN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THIS NEW STEP WAS TAKEN  
IN LINE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF WIDENING THE  
SCOPE OF RATIONING FACILITIES TO COVER AREAS BEYOND  
THE TOWNS. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOW  
REPEAT NOW TRYING TO EXTEND RATIONING FACILITIES TO  
THE VILLAGES. UNDER THE NEW ARRANGEMENT ALL WORKERS  
AND EMPLOYEES OF INDUSTRIAL UNITS WITH 50 OR MORE  
EMPLOYEES WILL RECEIVE 35 SEERS (ALMOST 80 POUNDS) OF  
WHEAT PER MONTH. THE MINISTER ESTIMATED THAT THE NEW  
POLICY WOULD BENEFIT ABOUT 500,000 WORKERS, INCLUDING  
130,000 TEA GARDEN WORKERS. ALSO PRESENT AT THE PRESS  
CONFERENCE WERE THE LABOR MINISTER AND JATIYA SRAMIK  
LEAGUE (NATIONAL LABOR LEAGUE) GENERAL SECRETARY PROFESSOR

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YUSUF ALI, BAKSAL SECRETARY SHEIKH FAZLUL HOQUE MONI

AND LABOR LEAGUE EMBERS ABDUR RAHMAN, MP, AND KAZI  
MOZAMMEL HUQ, MP.

3. ACCORDING TO THE FOOD MINISTER, THE MANAGEMENT OF  
THE INDUSTRIAL UNITS (INCLUDING BOTH NATIONALIZED AND  
PRIVATELY OWNED INDUSTRIES) WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR  
PROCURING AND DISTRIBUTING THE RATION TO THE EMPLOYEES  
UNDER THE AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION OF THE FOOD DEPARTMENT.

THERE WOULD BE NO USE OF THE FOODGRAIN RATION DEALER  
SYSTEM.

4. THE MINISTER SAID THAT AN ADDITIONAL 60,000 TONS  
OF WHEAT WOULD BE REQUIRED ANNUALLY. THIS WOULD INCREASE  
THE AMOUNT OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED UNDER STATUTORY RATIONING  
BY ROUGHLY 10 PERCENT. FOODGRAIN DISTRIBUTED ANNUALLY  
TOTAL ABOUT 2.4 MILLION TONS. SOME OF THE WORKERS  
INVOLVED WERE ALREADY COVERED UNDER THE FOODGRAIN  
DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM SO THAT THE TOTAL DISTRIBUTION WILL  
NOT CHANGE VERY MUCH.

5. COMMENTS. THIS IS THE SECOND EXTENSION OF STATUTORY  
RATIONING IN THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS. RAJSHAHI WAS ADDED  
TO THE FOUR OTHER LARGEST CITIES OF BANGLADESH AT THE  
BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR. THIS LATEST EXTENSION IS A  
POLITICAL DECISION AND WAS PROMISED TO THE WORKERS ON  
MAY DAY BY PRIME MINISTER MANSOOR ALI. LABOR UNION  
OFFICIALS, LED BY SHEIKH MONI, HAVE DEMANDED THE ACTION  
FOR SOME TIME. WE SUSPECT THAT THE BDG IS CONCERNED  
OVER THE POTENTIAL FOR LABOR UNREST--DESPITE THE  
DISCIPLINE IMPOSED BY EMERGENCY POWERS--AND HOPES THE  
SUPPLYING OF CHEAP FOOD WILL PLACATE WORKERS' SENSE OF  
GRIEVANCE. THE EXTENSION, HOWEVER, ALSO REFLECTS A  
DISTURBING TREND TOWARD GREATER GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT  
TO PROVIDE FOOD AT SUBSIDIZED PRICES TO RELATIVELY  
WELL-OFF BANGLADESIS RATHER THAN MOVING TOWARD GREATER  
RELIANCE ON PRIVATE MARKET FORCES, OR DIRECTING IMPORTED  
FOOD FLOWS TO THE POOREST GROUPS.  
BOSTER

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**TAGS:** EAID, EAGR, BG  
**To:** STATE  
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